

Communication Considerations within NLP

The conscious mind can only handle around 7 chunks of data per second, and as our surroundings are full of information, our senses are being bombarded with approximately 2 billion bits of information every second of every waking hour. Thus, the brain has developed filters in order to make sense of what is happening. These include:

- What you believe
- What you want
- What is important to you
- What you recall or remember

All of these change through time (what was in your communication's model at 15 will be different at 35 or 80 years old) and so does the map that is used to experience reality. Externally generated data passes through this map, these filters and is held as an 'internal representation' of our experience in the world. This internal world then determines how you show up, your:

- State (thoughts, mindsets, and emotions)
- Body (physiology of posture, breathing, facial expressions)
- Behaviour (actions taken in the external world)

How do our Filters operate?

Our filter protects us by undertaking one of three actions:

- Deletions
- Generalisations
- Distortions

Deletions occur to prevent overload of the nervous system. That which is relevant or meaningful does enter as data, but conscious attention isn't paid to it. And when we have an experience of something new, that makes an impact, a deletion can get amended and the new information comes into our awareness. There is a small story about how that works. Please click [the link for the CAR story.](#)

The implications of this are that what you focus on in life is what you get, and when you decide you want something else in your life, you can just change

your focus toward that and delete the other from your attention. It may take practice to do this – it is called a pattern interrupt, and it is that process that shifts ingrained habits and lays the foundation of developing new ones.

In order to understand this more easily, here is a useful metaphor.

Think of it like this, all our behaviours start out like a goat track wondering around the hill of our mind, every time we repeat the same thing the goat track becomes wider and more automatic. This is then a Habit which operates like an 8-lane superhighway in the brain. Our reactions speed down this superhighway without any thought or attention – they become automatic. When a decision is made to shift that to something new, a trigger or a pre-disposition or choice will appear and if in the moment you choose to dismiss it (delete it) and turn your attention to a new point of focus – then the superhighway starts to diminish and the goat track of the new begins to grow.

However, there can also be an issues when deletions occur around something that could provide more choice. EG. Suppose you are a woman who is quite short and petite – and you'd really like to be in a loving relationships with a partner. However, in your mind you have deleted potential candidates that you believe are too tall for you. By shifting your decision on this you will widen your options around attracting an appropriate mate.

Generalisations are very helpful if you are a scientist, mathematician, or an artist – or as a child, as they group an experience into a category of similar past experiences. Generalisations reduce the amount of information you need to deal with by labelling it and arranging it into a category (like an internal filing system), that may include sub classifications.

EG. There is an animal crossing the road, ahead. In the distance. It has long hair, and it looks like a cat – your brain has a word for it, and you match the shape and movement you see to that label. It is broad enough to include big or small cats. If it is obvious the label sticks, but your brain can also run other alternate categories – 'could it be a wild cat, a puma, or a baby lion?' there is a confirmation that 'no its too small and I see it has what looks like a collar- so it goes firmly in domestic cat classification. It will remain there until it does something un-cat like, such as bark !

Generalisations are very useful, otherwise we'd have to have a new word for every new object or experience. However, its' limitations are that it can create rigid thinking and blind us to exceptions to the rule. If we've had a bad

experience in a relationship – generalising to anticipate that every other relationship will turn out the same way – will eliminate choice and opportunity.

In language we can hear generalisations when ‘absolutes’ are used, such as

- always
-never
-must
- Everyone

They are all encompassing and leave no margin for variation. They are limiting by their very nature.

Distortions occur when sensory data is interpreted or given a label or a meaning. Distortions apply to things we see, hear, or feel, and they can be the cause of conflict. Just think of the reporting of a traffic accident by on-lookers; how often does the interpretation across observers do not line up – and it’s not that people do this consciously. But it is an important consideration to be aware of as it happens so naturally as a way of processing data.

Distortion allows us to enhance or diminish aspects of an experience EG. becoming engrossed in a book happens due to the ability to distort sensory input from 4 senses and enhance the other – sight. The downside is that distortion drives jumping to conclusions without enough verifying data, or based on past experience of something similar, or on a belief you hold. EG. The audience to a presentation is very still and silent, you interpret their faces as being blank and switched off – that they are bored. The question is – what else might be actually going on?

The challenge with these three filter processes is that they are almost immediate, unconscious, and mostly we are unaware they are happening. In fact, we can make up a whole complex story as a result of their operating – and they do and can operate in tandem. We will work with a tool to unpack these with our Mentee in one of the tool kits included in the main session.